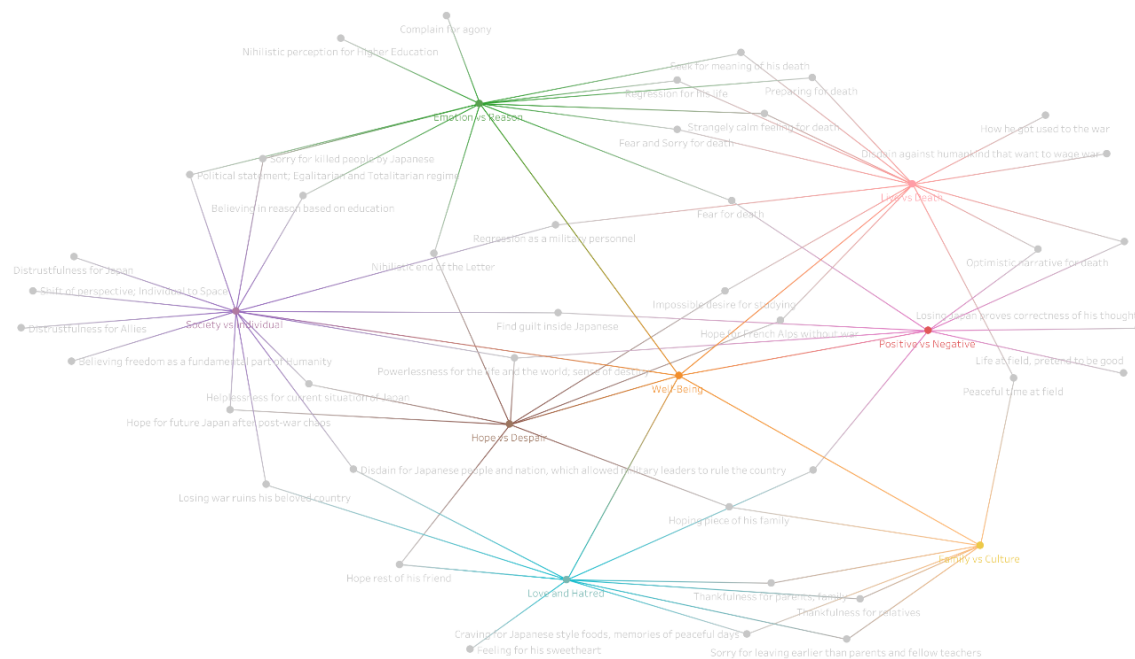


Until recently, humankind enjoyed one of the most peaceful eras in its history. Nevertheless, now the situation is changing dramatically, and conflicts are going to war in certain areas. Why did soldiers choose to fight for the country during wartime? What was the reason to live during the fierce period, and what made them not cease to live? By answering those questions, it is possible to make aware of ideas that consist of the hidden motivation in humankind to live. In addition to the war, despite a mostly peaceful world, suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15–29-year-olds. This fact also encourages me to seek out this question. According to the class and several readings related to well-being, examining primary sources from people who were facing death could be helpful for these questions.

The method that was used for this project is called descriptive coding. Death letters of Japanese soldiers during WW2 (<https://www.kamikazeimages.net/writings/uehara/index.htm> for the translated letters; *kike wadatsumi no koe* for Japanese letters) and letters from Japanese American soldiers who fought in Europe as a member of the 442nd Infantry Regiment (<https://worldcat.org/en/title/47802529>) were used for this research because those primary materials shares and differs some fundamental points such as ethnicity, nationality, meaning to fight, and the fierceness of field. After the coding, for the sake of capturing the big picture of the findings, coded nodes were categorized into seven groups: Positive vs. Negative, Love vs. Hatred, Emotion vs. Reason, Family vs. Culture, Society vs. Individual, Life vs. Death, and Hope vs. Despair. Each node has one or two connections for each category to reveal similarities and differences. However, classifying nodes is not enough to depict a big picture of the finding. Thus in figure 1, categories and nodes are visualized to help understand the result more easily and comprehensively.

<Figure 1: also available [here](#)>



As a result, 1) perception for the future, 2) external and internal belief, and 3) attitude toward colleagues are the three significant points, and the following three paragraphs will argue each topic.

The perception for the future is the idea that shows the difference between Japanese soldiers and Japanese-American soldiers most obvious way. Each category has nodes that relate to the future. The future would not come for Japanese soldiers because they knew they would die very soon. One soldier shifted his focus to the after-death world and wrote, "I am in no way scared of death. Instead, I feel glad. The reason why is that I believe that I can meet my dear Older Brother Tatsu. My greatest desire is to see him again in heaven. ... I believe that through death I will meet others again in heaven, and consequently I do not fear death. Death is nothing at all when you think that it is a

process of going up to heaven." In contrast, in the letter of the Japanese American soldier, there are no negative words for the future despite the fact he was on duty to rescue the "Lost Battalion" from the German siege, which was known for being a fierce battle. In the letter, the 442nd soldier mentioned meeting old friends or eating food after the war's end and wrote, "Whenever we talk about food it's always with the great longing for nihonshoka [Japanese food] of rice with sashimi [raw fish], fish, tsukemono [pickled vegetable], tempura [batter-fried food, usually fish or vegetables] and china meshi [chinese food]," which seems a very positive attitude for his future.

For the second point, Japanese soldiers tend to show contradictory thoughts about their beliefs, while Japanese American soldiers do not. Obviously, there should be censorship for letters from both sides, but still, it is interesting enough. Japanese government taught about the war as "liberation from European Imperialism," but actually, what they did was a carbon copy of European Imperialism. Because of that, letters from Japanese soldiers shows conflicts between their belief and their behavior during wartime. On the other hand, Japanese American soldiers did not mention their beliefs. It could be deleted by censorship, but it could be possible that the United States did not have apparently contradicted propaganda.

Lastly, the attitude towards colleagues, especially those in charge, differs. Japanese soldiers expressed some negative thoughts about their higher officer in the letter because of their behavior. In contrast, Japanese Americans did not express but rather showed some favorable feelings towards them.

Focusing on the first point, perceptions for the future seem taking a key part of the reason to live. Examining each node related to the future revealed that the presence of the family or intimate relationship is crucial in both Japanese and Japanese American soldiers' will to live. Although Japanese soldiers have negative or despairing perceptions of their future, they did not choose to cease to live by themselves. It is easy to conclude they could not commit suicide because they were under the control of Japanese or Allied forces. However, some Japanese higher officers, such as Hideki Tojo, tried to kill themselves under the rule of the Allies, so it should be possible to commit suicide. One possibility for explaining this situation is their craving for family or partners. Focusing on the Hope vs. Despair and Family vs. Society categories, Japanese soldiers had some sense of hope for the future rooted in their families. They knew seeing their family before their end of life was almost impossible, but theoretically, they still had a very small chance to see them. I assume this small hope and craving for the family made them live in a tough time. For Japanese American soldiers, in contrast, their letters were filled with hope for the future. Many possibilities made them optimistic about their situation, but one possibility that seems worth examining is the presence of the family. In their letter, as I excerpted above, they mentioned the family members, the food with the family, and friends in their homeland. They seemed to have a more positive perception of the future than Japanese soldiers, but they were still fighting in very severe conditions. Their craving for family or peaceful memory with their family might motivate them to cling to life.

Those findings remind the idea of eudaimonic and hedonic well-being. Both side did not lose their will to live, mainly because of their family. It is deeply related to eudaimonic well-being, which could be one factor in why they chose to live. World Health Organization's report preventing suicide mentioned solid personal relationships such as partners, family members, peers, friends, and significant others "have the most influence and can be supportive in times of crisis." Thus, a family could be a fundamental and universal source of well-being for humankind at any time.

Throughout this project, the research process faced some problems. Firstly, to find actual primary sources. The letters I used for this project are from books that are edited. These materials are primary sources but remain questions about the information's pureness. Secondly, the impact of censorship by the government is not measurable. It is evident that both Japanese and United States officials censored letters, especially during WW2. Also, the book I use to read letters from Japanese soldiers was published during the GHQ's occupation of Japan. Actually, some part of the letter was tweaked because of the "militaristic" expression. For future projects, considering these points would provide more sophisticated results and insight into the project theme.

Ryoji uehara - <https://www.kamikazeimages.net/writings/uehara/index.htm>

"I am in no way scared of death. Instead, I feel glad. The reason why is that I believe that I can meet my dear Older Brother Tatsu. My greatest desire is to see him again in heaven. ... I believe that through death I will meet others again in heaven, and consequently I do not fear death. Death is nothing at all when you think that it is a process of going up to heaven."

- Craving to meet with family, but since he knew he gonna die, he thought he could meet with family at the heaven

Japanese American soldier, 442nd

"Whenever we talk about food it's always with the great longing for nihonshoka [Japanese food] of rice with sashimi [raw fish], fish, tsukemono [pickled vegetable], tempura [batter-fried food, usually fish or vegetables] and china meshi [chinese food]."

- Craving for food on the house

WHO preventing suicide report

P.36

Disaster, war and conflict

Experiences of natural disaster, war and civil conflict can increase the risk of suicide because of the destructive impacts they have on social well-being, health, housing, employment and financial security. Paradoxically, suicide rates may decline during and immediately after a disaster or conflict, but this varies between different groups of people. The immediate decline may be due to the emergent needs for intensified social cohesion. Overall, there seems to be no clear direction in suicide mortality following natural disasters as different studies show different patterns (67).

P.44

Strong personal relationships

The risk of suicidal behaviour increases when people suffer from relationship conflict, loss or discord. Conversely, the cultivation and maintenance of healthy close relationships can increase individual resilience and act as a protective factor against the risk of suicide. The individual's closest social circle – partners, family members, peers, friends and significant others – have the most influence and can be supportive in times of crisis. Friends and family can be a significant source of social, emotional and financial support, and can buffer the impact of external stressors. In particular, resilience gained from this support mitigates the suicide risk associated with childhood trauma (51). Relationships are especially protective for adolescents and the elderly, who have a higher level of dependency.

Religious or spiritual beliefs

When considering religious or spiritual beliefs as conferring protection against suicide, it is important to be cautious. Faith itself may be a protective factor since it typically provides a structured belief system and can advocate for behaviour that can be considered physically and mentally beneficial (132). However, many religious and cultural beliefs and behaviours may have also contributed towards stigma related to suicide due to their moral stances on suicide which can discourage help-seeking behaviours. The protective value of religion and spirituality may arise from providing access to a socially cohesive and supportive community with a shared set of values. Many religious groups also prohibit suicide risk factors such as alcohol use. However, the social practices of certain religions have also encouraged self-immolation by fire among specific groups such as South Asian women who have lost their

husbands (133). Therefore, while religion and spiritual beliefs may offer some protection against suicide, this depends on specific cultural and contextual practices and interpretations.

P.07

In some countries, suicide rates are highest among the young, and globally suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15–29-year-olds.